

Dear Transportation Committee Members:

I am writing in support of proposed Senate Bill 834. The Estuary Transit District, doing business as 9 Town Transit, has been expressing concerns about the Shoreline Shuttle over the past several years as the tremendous growth has created several problems. Since 2009, this service has seen a ridership increase of 80%, and will provide nearly 70,000 passenger trips this year. Unfortunately, despite multiple requests to DOT over the past four years, this route still runs as it did five years ago when just 36,000 trips were made annually. Today, this service is at a tipping point.

The Shoreline Shuttle is operated as a deviated-fixed route. This means customers can call and schedule the bus to deviate from the route up to $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile. No disability is required for this premium service. As the overall ridership has increased, so have the deviation requests. The Shoreline Shuttle now regularly performs as many as 30 deviations per day. The most popular deviation request times are also the busiest times for on-route passengers. Despite this increased demand, no additional time allowance has been made due to the need to meet the CT Transit S Route bus for New Haven bound transfers.

One of the biggest changes the route has seen is the shift in users from primarily seniors to younger adults traveling for employment purposes. This makes it more important than ever that we operate on time. Unfortunately, the deviations combined with the additional passenger traffic have resulted in an on-time performance of less than 50%. More alarming, we are more than ten minutes late 30% of the time. Lateness due to deviations has become a leading cause of customer complaints.

The rapid growth of the Shoreline Shuttle has also impacted capacity. Standees are a regular occurrence, and overloads continue to happen two to three times per month. This further contributes to the services unreliability. The majority of our customers have some kind of disability, making standing a safety concern. A failure to act immediately will have a severe negative impact on not only the Shoreline Shuttle, but all of ETD's services. With the Shoreline Shuttle being 65% of our ridership, we cannot afford to have the reputation of being unreliable on this service.

The district has provided two proposals to address these issues ranging in cost from \$150,000 to \$300,000 in operating cost per year. The district understands the state's current fiscal situation, but believes that a long-term plan must be put in place to resolve these issues. This route has become a major contributor to the environmental and economic health of the Route 1 corridor in our region and must evolve to meet the changing needs of our residents.

I therefore respectfully request that the Transportation Committee support Senate Bill 834.

Sincerely,

Joseph Comerford
Executive Director
Estuary Transit District d.b.a. 9 Town Transit